

OCTOBER 11, 1984

More rain has fallen in Texas since my last report. Amounts vary from floodlets to good showers. Nevertheless, the important thing is that we may be entering the wet phase of the bad dry spell, which is by far the most popular stage of a drouth.

In spite of the rains (and I have had 2 inches). I am still going to cut down on our cattle. Out of the 65 real and imagined reasons to run a cow in this part of the Shortgrass Country, after so much hard times, an entire essay on the subject would take only about six lines of double margin copy. As the season of feeds and feeding nears, I may have even less than that to state my case.

Until the rains filled up the waterholes in the pastures, I have a plan on how to cull the cows. I was going to ride around to the waterings with a man on horseback to help me and bring in every cow brute that was too indifferent of our joint welfare to go off and hunt up a little dry stubble to help with the overhead.

I was plenty tired of seeing old sisters walk into water and forget to leave. I wasn't going to try each case or pay any attention to quality. Black cows think through their stomachs. Messages to their brains are triggered by the odor of cottonseed meal and the sound of a pickup horn. Once the temperatures in the fall drop into the low 60s, they'd plunge headlong through a stand of sugar cane nine feet tall if they happened to get a sniff of meal from a downwind position. I was fed up with cattle whose whole thought process was linked to their digestive systems.

Other than their heritage, two other things cause drouth cattle to hang around waterings. I think one is from seeing how bad they look in their reflection in the water trough, thus doubting if they have the strength to go back to the pasture. And second, I believe that when grass is that scarce, they can't make up their minds which direction to go to find anything to graze.

But whatever it is, it hits the owners too. I see old boys flinch so hard in the barbershop from looking in the mirror that they nearly hip themselves backing the chairs. It's normally true that whatever strikes the owner his old cows, too, except the cows usually show a higher rate of recovery.

You just watch. Our luck is changing. If we have a winter like they do in Palm Beach or Miami, followed by a spring 60 days ahead of schedule, we'll be back to full strength. I'm going to keep watching those old loafers until frost. They'd better perk up or they'll be hanging on a hook sliding down a rail.